Curriculum and Instruction Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 17, 2011

Attendees:

David Burtner, MD          Carolyn Klatt, MLIS
Marie Dent, PhD            Edward Klatt, MD
Robert Donner, MD          Erin Meehan, MSII
Wayne Glasgow, PhD         Michael Smith, PhD
Ashley Horner, PhD         Tina Thompson, PhD, Chair
Jeff Ignatoff, MD          Jerry Tift, PhD
Klugh Kennedy, PharmD

Absent:

Grady Carter, MD          Patrick Roche, MD
Wade Fletcher, MD         Abhi Saxena, MSIV
Joseph Harmon, MSI        Allison Scheetz, MD
Blanca Lopez, MD          McKinley Thomas, EdD
Umangi Patel, MSIII

Call to order

Dr. Tina Thompson, Chair of the CIC Committee, called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 3, 2011 meeting were presented for the approval of the committee. The following changes were recommended to the minutes:

The description of Capstone is the crowning achievement or final stroke; the culmination or acme of the curriculum. Statement should read: The description of Capstone is the crowning achievement or final stroke; the culmination or acme of the curriculum (Spelling correction to the word acme).

The following motion was made: …That the CIC endorses the concept of implementing a Longitudinal Course for Year 4 Students. Should be corrected to: The following motion was made: …That the CIC endorses the concept of implementing a Longitudinal Course for Year 3 Students (Statement corrected from Year 4 to Year 3 students).

The minutes were approved with the above mentioned changes.
Old Business

Year 3/Year 4 Curriculum: Committee Membership on Longitudinal and Capstone Course Task Forces

At the February 3, 2011 meeting, the CIC endorsed the concept of implementing a Capstone Course for Year 4 students and a Longitudinal Course for Year 3 students. The Year 3/Year 4 Subcommittee recommended setting up a Longitudinal and Capstone Course Task Force. Dr. Donner stated that the following faculty members have come forth to sit on the Longitudinal Course Task Force:

- Chair – Marie Dent, PhD
- Clinical Faculty Member – David Burtner, MD

The following faculty members have come forth to sit on the Capstone course Task Force:

- Chair – Allison Scheetz, MD
- Basic Science Member – Tina Thompson, PhD
- Community Medicine Member/Liaison – Marie Dent, PhD

Dr. Thompson noted that there will also be advisors to these committees made up of faculty who are interested in introducing curricular ideas. These advisors do not have to be on the Task Force at all times nor are they required to be a CIC member. Dr. Thompson reminded CIC members to either actively take part in the Task Forces or recommend faculty/students who may be interested in being a part of a Task Force.

New Business

Histology Review

Dr. Glasgow presented the Histology Discipline review. A copy of his full report was forwarded to CIC members earlier this week for their information. The subcommittee consisted of Dr. Glasgow and 4 out of 6 appointed students.

Discipline Overview

Each medical student is required to achieve at least a 65% overall average on 165 MDE questions distributed in 10 of the 12 phases to pass the histology discipline in the BMP program.

Histology is included in each of the BMP phases except for Phase B and the Brain and Behavior phase. There are 82 histology MDE questions in Year 1 and 83 histology MDE questions in Year 2. It was noted that the NBME performance for Histology and Cell Biology by Mercer students is at or slightly above national average for the 3 year period reviewed. Information reviewed covers the past three years for the Classes of 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Discipline objectives are referenced to Drexel University College of Medicine Microscopic Anatomy course, University of Cincinnati School of Medicine Histology course and exams, NBME subject exam content, and surveys of several Histology and Cell Biology textbooks. The discipline uses three primary
textbooks with an estimated 1350 pages of primary reading for histology in the Year 1 and Year 2 BMP program.

CIC subcommittee review of discipline report

Textbooks: Three primary textbooks for one discipline are a bit overwhelming. Students would prefer to have one primary text (accepting that any one text has limitations) with other texts referenced only when key for understanding a concept. Students felt that in many phases the amount of primary reading assigned was out of balance with the number of Histology questions in a given phase (e.g. over 400 pages for 22 MDE questions in Phase A). Students felt this led to either not attempting to cover this much material given the number of exam questions or too much time spent on the histology discipline reading at the expense of other disciplines. Students did not agree with the idea less reading time/page required in histology since many of the pages having images with limited text. For the novice learner in histology, students felt that examining and understanding images required more time than just reading text.

Study Guide: In general, students found the histology study guide objectives to be well written and in-depth. For most phases, students felt the histology objectives were quite broad in coverage and students lacked an appreciation for what areas merited a focus of study. Students found the instructions in the study guide on how to read and interpret each of the three texts to be cumbersome and difficult to follow (further emphasizing student frustration with the multiple primary texts).

Resource Sessions: Students found the resource sessions to be of a consistent high quality and attending/viewing resource sessions to be a key component in achieving success on the histology component of the MDE. Students noted that most of the resource sessions were about 3 hrs. in length, making it difficult for students to maintain focus for the entire session. Given the number and length of histology resources sessions, students stated they could not devote the same amount of time to other disciplines (even though those disciplines might have many more questions in a given phase). Students did note the visual component of histology led to more of a perceived need for resource sessions than with some other disciplines.

Phase Cases: In general, students did not find that the cases brought out the histology material. Group discussion often focuses on big concepts and students felt the histology discipline focus was on detail.

MDE: Students found histology MDE questions to be well-written with high level of clarity. Students found the questions to often be focused on details rather than big concepts. Given the amount of reading and breadth of topics covered in a phase, students found it difficult to be prepared for the detail of each question. Students felt that they put a great deal of time and effort into histology study (often to the detriment of study in other disciplines), but this extra effort did not result in improved performance on histology questions. Students noted that many MUSM students had low overall averages in histology and many students were involved in histology remediation. However, MUSM students performed at or
above the national average on the histology/cell biology component of USMLE Step 1 exam. Students noted somewhat of a disconnect between the internal MUSM evaluations and external USMLE evaluations. Students found the USMLE Step 1 exam questions in histology/cell biology to be more focused on more general concepts.

**Summary:** Students have a high level of respect for the histology faculty and found the faculty to be dedicated educators. Students ask for a more limited number of primary references and for learning objectives and exam questions to improve focus on important concepts rather than details.

The floor was open to discussion of the report. Numerous points of concern were raised and some potential solutions were discussed. A summary of these follows:

- Reduce the number of primary textbooks,
- What component is Histology trying to emphasize, Morphology vs. Cell Biology?
- Should the CIC restrict the number/time of resource sessions for this discipline?
- Is there too much Histology in the curriculum? If every discipline took this approach, there would not be enough time in the year. Is what they are requiring in terms of volume appropriate?
- From CIC perspective, need to look at curriculum as a whole. If all disciplines required this much effort, curriculum would fall apart, look at volume, is it out of line? Requirements of Histology exceed other disciplines.
- Study guide needs to be focused to a single primary text.
- Assessments need to reflect material emphasized in the study guide.
- At least 33% of the 165 questions on the MDE should be above knowledge/comprehension
- Consider the reduction of reading material by 15% or not more than 1 standard deviation of the mean of the rest of the disciplines.
- If the reading is reduced, what would be the educational consequences?
- How much can be incorporated into cases?
- What is required of students is impacting performance in other disciplines. Evidence – #1 discipline remediation in the school. Students spend tremendous amount of time to learn to be success in histology.
- Resource sessions are recommended, should not be required. Students feel they must attend the resource sessions in order to be successful in this discipline.
- Consensus of the committee, the Histology footprint is too large in our curriculum
- Doing nothing is not an option.

It is the consensus of the CIC committee that this is a complicated situation but something has to be done. It was decided to ask Dr. Kacsoh to come to a future meeting to discuss the issues and to identify a workable solution.
**Additional Item**

The Committee expressed concern over the seeming arbitrary use of the term ‘Academic Freedom’ whenever the CIC initiates curricular review and/or reform. Dr. Thompson offered to invite Mr. Bill Solomon to a meeting to discuss this issue.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:01 PM.

Minutes recorded by:
Debbie Brickner